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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 336th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 18 November 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Diallo ..... (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

2. **The Chair**, summarizing activities and developments that had taken place since the Committee's previous meeting, said that the United States Congress had blocked $200 million in aid for the Palestinian Authority on 1 October 2011, following Palestine's application for United Nations membership. On 11 October, the Israeli authorities had advanced their plans for the construction of approximately 2,600 housing units in the Givat Hamatos settlement in East Jerusalem. The first stage of a prisoner exchange agreement between Israel and Hamas had been completed later that month. On 24 October, the Security Council had held an open debate on the topic "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question".

3. Following the decision by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on 31 October to admit Palestine as a Member State of that organization, the United States of America had announced that it was cutting off funding for UNESCO, acting under a domestic legal requirement to withhold funds from any United Nations agency that recognized the Palestinian State. On 1 November, the Israeli Prime Minister had ordered the accelerated construction of some 2,000 settlement units in East Jerusalem and in the Gush Etzion and Ma'ale Adumim settlements and, on 3 November, announced the freezing of Israel's annual contribution to UNESCO. The Russell Tribunal on Palestine, an international citizen-based forum working to mobilize public opinion in support of a just solution of the question of Palestine, had held its third session in Cape Town, South Africa, with the participation of two Palestinian experts, whose attendance had been facilitated by the Committee. On 4 November, the Israeli Navy had stopped two small vessels in international waters off Gaza as they sought to break the imposed blockade of the Gaza Strip. The vessels had been brought to an Israeli port and civil society activists from nine countries had been deported.

4. On 11 November, the Security Council Committee on the Admission of New Members had adopted its report concerning the application of Palestine for admission to membership in the United Nations, although it had been unable to make a unanimous recommendation to the Security Council.

5. He welcomed a group of 10 Palestinian journalists, who were participating in the Committee's proceedings as part of the annual training programme for Palestinian broadcasters and journalists of the Department of Public Information.

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

6. **Mr. Kohona** (Sri Lanka), Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, said that the report of the Special Committee examined the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan from September 2010 to August 2011 and included information that had been gathered during the Special Committee's mission to the region in July 2011 and its first-ever visit to Palestinian territory.

7. Israel's blockade continued to amount to a collective punishment for the civilian population. The Israeli-enforced restrictions on the freedom of movement within the Gaza Strip and on the importation of materials necessary to rebuild houses, schools and infrastructure destroyed by Israel during Operation Cast Lead in 2009 made reconstruction impossible. The situation required immediate attention because 51,000 civilians had lost their homes during the Operation. Israel's blockade was having a grave impact on children, who were frequently exposed to, and were victims of, violence, lacked opportunities and access to education and experienced rapidly deteriorating physical and mental health.

8. Israel continued to engage in practices that violated international law in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. The continued confiscation of Palestinian land, the demolition of homes, the displacement of families, the expansion of settlements and violence against Palestinians and their property by Israeli settlers were the most prominent concerns. There were 9,204 housing units under construction in

the West Bank at the time of the mission — most of them west of the Wall and there were plans to build thousands more housing units, especially in East Jerusalem.

9. Committee members had been unable to travel to the Syrian Arab Republic and had interacted with victims in the occupied Golan Heights via teleconference. Unfortunately, there had been no change in Israeli policies there.

10. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that he was pleased that the Committee members had been able to visit a part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and expressed the hope that they would be able to visit the other parts, including East Jerusalem, in the future. He expressed his gratitude to the Chair and the Committee members for their participation in the debate at the Security Council meetings in October and their expression of strong solidarity with the Palestinian people and support for Palestine's application for membership in the United Nations. The report of the Security Council Committee on the Admission of New Members objectively reflected the different positions of the Council membership, the majority of which had been in favour of the application, while some believed that the vote should be postponed. One delegation had objected to the application and had used it to end negotiations between Palestine and Israel.

11. The Palestinian people had a natural, historical and legal right to join the community of nations. The application for membership had clear support from the majority of Member States and from the Palestinian population. Many States had not received the support of the Security Council initially but had succeeded eventually in joining the Organization. The Palestinian leadership was currently considering what the next step should be in Palestine's quest to become a full Member of the United Nations.

12. Palestine had recently been admitted to UNESCO as a Member State, paving the way for Palestine to join other United Nations agencies or to accede to international instruments. He expressed gratitude to the States that had supported Palestine's application for membership in UNESCO and suggested that the Committee should address a congratulatory letter to the States that had supported the bid.

13. The Israeli Government was using illegal measures to punish Palestine for legally joining UNESCO. Those measures included the escalation of illegal settlement activity, especially in occupied East Jerusalem, and the withholding of tax revenue from the Palestinian Authority. Those illegal activities had been described in letters sent to the Security Council almost weekly and had been brought to the attention of the Chair of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General. Those efforts would continue until the tax revenues were released and Israel stopped settlement activities, which were a violation of both international law and road map obligations. Settlement activity could not coexist with peace: one was a negation of the other.

14. The Palestinian leadership could be participating in a meeting with the Hamas leadership in Cairo, arranged through the mediation of the Egyptian Government, with the aim of promoting implementation of the reconciliation agreement signed on 4 May 2011.

15. He drew attention to the upcoming International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and the resolutions before the Committee, and expressed optimism regarding the adoption of the political resolutions by the General Assembly.

Consideration of draft resolutions on the question of Palestine

16. **The Chair** welcomed the fact that the process of internal reconciliation within the Palestinian leadership was under way and looked forward to positive developments in that regard. The freezing of Palestinian assets was a form of punishment being inflicted on the Palestinian Authority by Israel and required action on the part of the Committee. He welcomed the idea of sending a congratulatory letter to States that had voted in favour of Palestine's membership in UNESCO and said that the Bureau would examine the idea.

17. He drew attention to the four draft resolutions entitled, respectively, "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People", "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat", "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat" and "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", which were to be submitted to the General Assembly under agenda item 37, entitled

"Question of Palestine". They were based on the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, but had been updated to reflect recent political and other developments. The Bureau recommended the draft resolutions for approval by the Committee.

18. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the four draft resolutions.

19. *It was so decided.*

Accreditation of civil society organizations with the Committee (Working Paper No. 6)

20. **The Chair** drew attention to Working Paper No. 6, which contained applications for accreditation to the Committee submitted by three non-governmental organizations. After reviewing the applications, the Bureau had concluded that the three organizations fulfilled the criteria for accreditation and recommended that they should be accredited. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the applications.

21. *The requests for accreditation to the Committee received from Migratory Letters Campaign (Gaza), Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association (East Jerusalem/Ramallah) and Palestinian Peace Coalition — Geneva Initiative (Ramallah) were approved.*

Other matters

22. The Chair appealed to all Committee members and observers to actively participate in the discussion of agenda item 37 "Question of Palestine" in the plenary meetings of the General Assembly and to support the adoption of the draft resolutions. He also recalled that the special meeting to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would take place on 29 November and requested delegations to be represented at the ambassadorial level.

23. **Mr. Jiménez** (Nicaragua) congratulated the Observer for Palestine on the achievements made in promoting the Palestinian cause, in particular Palestine's historic admission to UNESCO, and encouraged him to press on, despite the economic and political sanctions being taken against the Palestinian people.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.